



# NATIONAL FAMILY PRESERVATION NETWORK

*Developing Strong Families by Supporting Preservation, Reunification, and Fatherhood initiatives*

June 23, 2011

The following is a statement in support of PSSF reauthorization, specifically with regard to the allocation for family preservation funding which includes Intensive Family Preservation Services (IFPS).

## ***What are the Benefits of IFPS?***

### **Better Outcomes for Children**

Because IFPS prevents unnecessary out-of-home placement, it's important to first look at what happens when children are removed from their family:

- Children in foster care spend an average of more than two years away from their homes.
- A child is twice as likely to die from abuse in foster care than in his own home.
- Maltreated children placed out-of-home exhibit significant behavior problems in comparison to maltreated children who remain in their homes.
- Maltreated children removed from their homes later experience higher delinquency rates, teen birth rates, and lower earnings than children who remain in their homes.
- Children placed in foster care have 2–3 times higher arrest, conviction, and imprisonment rates as adults than maltreated children who remain in their own homes.
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder strikes one in four foster youth after leaving foster care. That is double the PTSD rates of veterans returning from Iraq and over 6 times the rate among the general U.S population.
- In studies that spanned four states, one out of every three youth who aged out of foster care struggled with mental health problems such as major depression, substance abuse, social phobia and anxiety. Almost one quarter of such youth in Texas had a history of suicide attempts.
- Former foster youth are at high risk for a range of other health problems including generally compromised health, substance abuse, sexual risk-taking behaviors, physical and sexual abuse and malnourishment.

With appropriate targeting, IFPS diverts 80–90+ percent of children from out-of-home placement, but it is estimated that states provide IFPS to fewer than 1 in 10 children placed in foster care. Extensive media coverage of deaths of abused and neglected children may result in child welfare caseworkers removing more children from their homes. In turn, caseloads increase, workers are overloaded, and the tragic consequence is more child deaths. Only about half of the children in foster care return home each year. Approximately 50,000 children are adopted each year but at least twice that many are waiting for adoptive homes. Some of these children will grow up in foster care. No state has been able to effectively address child abuse and neglect by focusing primarily on out-of-home placement and adoption. States with effective child welfare systems focus on reducing the number of children entering out-of-home care. IFPS is strategically positioned to assist in this effort and would have far greater impact if every state were to establish or strengthen and expand these services.

## **Safety**

In over three decades of IFPS nationwide with thousands of families served, there has been less than a handful of child deaths that can be directly linked to IFPS, either during or after the intervention. Recent research indicates that safety is the strongest area when families are assessed following an IFPS intervention.

To what can this strong safety record of IFPS be attributed?

- The safety of the child is the highest priority.
- IFPS therapists respond immediately to family crises. Workers generally see families within 24 hours of referral.
- IFPS therapists meet with families in the home which allows for a more thorough assessment and opportunities for effective intervention.
- IFPS therapists see families frequently, sometimes for hours at a time in order to provide a quick response to emergencies and to teach skills during a crisis when families are most willing to learn new behaviors. Workers are available 24/7 and carry only a few cases at a time in order to be readily available.
- Prior to terminating the intervention, IFPS therapists connect families with other community services to reinforce gains. Families are not abandoned at the end of the IFPS intervention.
- Therapist training, supervision, and ongoing monitoring and quality assurance provide additional measures to ensure the safety of families.

## **Improvement in Family Functioning**

The North Carolina Family Assessment Scale is an assessment tool used in conjunction with IFPS services. The tool measures family functioning at intake and at case closure. Research indicates that most families show improved functioning in all areas that the tool measures: environment, parental capabilities, family interactions, safety, and child well-being. Only 6–9% of families deteriorate in functioning following an IFPS intervention. With those families, the assessment at case closure may result in out-of-home placement for the child. Although placement is not prevented, the safety of the child is ensured, and that is the top priority.

## **Cost Savings**

Far more federal, state, and local funds are spent on out-of-home care and services than are spent on in-home services. For example, Child Trends reports that states spent at least \$4 billion in federal Title IV-E funds on foster care in FY 2006. In contrast, states spent \$363 million in Title IV-B funds (Subpart 2—Promoting Safe and Stable Families) on family preservation and support

as well as time limited reunification and adoption promotion. While there are other sources of funding for both foster care and in-home services, the overall ratio is about ten dollars of out-of-home care funding (entitlement) for each dollar of in-home funding (capped).

The financial incentive to increase funding for IFPS is that for each child who receives in-home services and safely remains at home rather than entering out-of-home placement, there can be substantial savings. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) found that Intensive Family Preservation Services programs adhering to the HOMEBUILDERS® model are very cost-effective. WSIPP calculated \$2.54 of benefits for each dollar of cost due to reduced out-of-home placements and lowered incidence of abuse and neglect.



Priscilla Martens  
Executive Director  
National Family Preservation Network  
3971 N 1400 E  
Buhl, Idaho 83316  
[director@nfpn.org](mailto:director@nfpn.org)  
888-498-9047

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